

September 1, 2011

Dear Moms and Dads:

I hope you're all looking forward to the beginning of the new year of Religious Education at St. Raymond's as much as I am. Think of all the new and wonderful things our children will learn this year about Jesus, His Church and our Faith. What a great opportunity to bring them closer to Christ, by coming to know Him better, both as a God who loves them personally and as a teacher of the truth about God and us.

I don't envy our kids today. As much as I wish my aging body were young again, I can't imagine having to deal with all the temptations, lies, and pressures kids go through today. On top of that, imagine what they will have to deal with when they become adults.

Most parents are very careful to try to provide their children with everything they need to live and thrive today and in the future. You try to make sure they eat right, take part in sports and exercise, and make friends, not to mention go to school, study, and do their homework. All this helps them to be the best they can be today, and prepares them to be the most happy and well adjusted adults they can be.

But that's just not enough. You and I both know they can only be happy and reach their highest potential both as children and as adults if Christ is part of their lives. And not just "part." Because Christ and Christianity isn't an afterthought—Christ is "*the way the truth and the life.*" Without Christ there is no understanding of the true meaning in life, and without His grace, there is no lasting strength, wisdom, peace, or joy.

Without Christ at the *center* of your children's lives, how can you hope for your children to see through and overcome the lies the secular culture lays before them as truths—lies about the most basic concepts of right and wrong, good and evil, happiness and suffering? And how can they be open to Christ and His grace, if they know nothing about Him?

And so, as important as playing sports and studying math is, there is nothing more important than knowing Jesus Christ and being an active participant in the life of His Church.

I know you take your parental responsibilities in this regard very seriously. And I promise, as your spiritual "Father," to do my best to help you. And one of the most important things I can do for you is give you the dedicated and caring assistance of Maria Ammirati and Janice Gorrie in our Religious Education office, and all the volunteers who help them.

But, again, God has sent us to assist *you*. We have your children for only 1 hour a week—how can we teach them the whole Catholic Faith, much less come to more deeply know Jesus in that short time? And whatever we do will be wasted if *you* do not build on and reinforce what we teach them. More than that, how can we begin to teach them if we are not building on and reinforcing what *you* have *already* taught them?

We can teach them prayers to say, but they will only learn them and take them *to heart* if you teach them *how* to pray them. We can teach them the 10 Commandments, but they will only learn to *live* them if you *show* them how. We can teach them that Jesus founded the Church on the teachings of the apostles, but only you can show them what it means to be truly sons and daughters of Holy Mother Church.

And this is where you begin: bringing them to religion class is not very helpful if you don't bring them to Sunday Mass! What good is knowledge of the Church, if they don't *do* the most important thing the Church does—worship God in the Eucharistic sacrifice? What good is learning the Commandments if you begin the week by rejecting # 3: “Keep holy the Sabbath”?

I join you in looking forward to a wonderful year for your children, especially in their religious and spiritual education and formation. I look forward to visiting our children this year in their classrooms, and seeing you all at Mass every Sunday.

Oremus pro invicem—let us pray for one another.

In Christ,

Fr. John De Celles